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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANJUL 000222

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DAKAR PASS RAO, DAO, AND ODC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/10/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [KMCA](#) [GA](#) [SG](#)  
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS FOLLOWING FOILED  
COUP PLOT

REF: A. BANJUL 212 AND PREVIOUS  
[1](#)B. BANJUL 188  
[1](#)C. BANJUL 206  
[1](#)D. BANJUL 209

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

SUMMARY

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[1](#)1. (C) President Jammeh continues his efforts to demonstrate that he remains in charge and that the public is rallying around him, while opposition parties issued a statement April 9 expressing doubt about the GOTG's capacity to "manage the apparent crisis." There are signs of disarray at the National Intelligence Agency. The number of detainees currently held in connection with the failed coup plot is about 25; rumors persist that the five reported escapees were secretly executed. We continue to receive reports of abuse

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of detainees that amounts to torture. We are told of Senegalese media report that GOS authorities have the coup plot's ringleader in custody; Senegalese Foreign Minister will reportedly visit Banjul "this week." Meanwhile, police sources do not rule out the possibility of disorderly demonstrations later this week to mark the sixth anniversary of authorities' shooting student protestors. Sources portray Jammeh as vengeful and determined to leave no stone unturned in ferreting out anyone conceivably linked to the coup plot. Ambassador will raise our concerns over detainees' treatment and other issues -- including need for access to detained Amcit Tamsir Jasseh -- in requested meeting with Jammeh. END SUMMARY.

OVERVIEW

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[1](#)2. (SBU) As the dust settles over the thwarted March 21 coup (ref a), President Jammeh continues his efforts to demonstrate that he remains in charge and that the public is rallying around him. On April 6, a delegation of National Assembly deputies, led by Deputy Speaker Belinda Bidwell, called on Jammeh "to pledge their allegiance," according to media reports. (COMMENT: We believe that Bidwell also took the occasion to register concern over the detained National Assembly speaker Sheriff Diba; the reasons for his detention remain unknown.) The media report that "tens of thousands" of Gambians are expected to march through downtown Banjul on April 15 to demonstrate their support for Jammeh.

13. (U ) Meanwhile, opposition parties continue to issue statements on the incident; following their initial press release March 26 (ref b), the leading opposition party, UDP, and allied party, NRP, issued a second statement April 9 urging the GOTG to exercise "tact and caution" in responding to the failed plot. Referring to the reported escape of five detainees (ref c), the parties said this episode contributed to doubts about the "capabilities of the administration in managing the apparent crisis." They went on to call on authorities to respect the rights of those still detained in connection with the plot and, in particular, to permit them access to family members and lawyers. (NOTE: To our knowledge, none of the detainees, military or civilian, has been allowed as yet to receive visitors. END NOTE)

#### DISARRAY AT NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (NIA)

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14. (C) Despite Jammeh's keenness to portray his government as operating normally, there are signs of disarray at one key agency, the NIA. Following the detention and reported escape of former Director General Daba Marena (ref c), rumors persist that his successor, Harry Sambou, will be replaced soon; in meeting last week with visiting RAO/Dakar officers, Sambou spoke of plans for a major restructuring of the agency, but was vague on details. The Deputy Director General position is vacant, following the detention of Ngorr Secka after only two weeks or so following his appointment. On April 10, the local press reported the dismissal and detention of several additional NIA officials.

#### STATUS OF DETAINEES

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15. (C) By our reckoning, there remain about 25 persons detained in connection with the failed plot, following last week's releases (ref c); rumor has it that National Assembly Speaker Sheriff Dibba will be released soon. There are also

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persistent rumors that, contrary to authorities' claim that former NIA Director General Daba Marena and four other detainees escaped, they were secretly executed. In April 10 conversation with Ambassador, Pap Saine, an Embassy contact and Editor-in-Chief of the independent daily, "The Point," stated that he had no hard evidence of these rumored executions, but would not rule them out. He pointed, in this regard, to the lack of details (e.g., location of escape, identities of escorting guards reportedly arrested for permitting the escape) provided by authorities in their report of the detainees' escape.

16. (C) We also continue to receive reports of detainees being subjected to beatings and other forms of abuse. A well-informed source claimed that former NIA Director General Abdoulie Kujabi, military officer Capt Pierre Mendy, and former senior GOTG official Alieu Jobe had all been beaten so severely as to require hospitalization. He went on to describe these beating and other forms of abuse (e.g., use of lit candles to inflict burns) as "severe torture" designed in part to extract confessions as well as to ensure docile behavior by detainees. In April 9 conversation with Interior Minister Baboucar Jatta, Ambassador registered deep concern over the ongoing reports of mistreatment of detainees; Jatta undertook to look into the matter, but stated that it was the Presidential security force and other military elements, not the regular police force under his control, that was responsible for the interrogation of detainees.

#### THE SENEGALESE ANGLE

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17. (C) Reflecting the failed coup plot's ongoing fallout on Gambian/Senegalese ties, on April 10 the local media reported Dakar's decision to "recall for consultations" its

Ambassador here, Ndiouga Ndiaye, as well as plans by the Senegalese Foreign Minister to visit Banjul "this week." Various sources have told us of a recent Senegalese media report that Senegalese authorities have detained the plot's ringleader, Lt Col Ndure Cham, in the Casamance, but will not extradite him to The Gambia out of concern that he will be executed.

#### ANNIVERSARY OF STUDENT KILLINGS

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18. (C) Meanwhile, April 10 marks the sixth anniversary of a 2000 incident in which authorities fired on student demonstrators, killing a dozen. While police sources report that all is calm in Banjul on the anniversary date today, they do not rule out the possibility of student demonstrations occurring later this week -- perhaps amidst the pro-Jammeh rally scheduled for April 15 reported above -- and becoming disorderly.

#### COMMENT

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19. (C) Editor-in-Chief Saine and other sources portray Jammeh as vengeful and determined to leave no stone unturned in ferreting out anyone conceivably linked to the failed plot. Authorities' continued refusal to grant families and others access to detainees is troubling, as are the reports of tortured detainees. Ambassador has repeated his request to see Jammeh in order to stress our concerns. We assume the Senegalese Foreign Minister's visit is designed first and foremost to assuage Jammeh's concerns over alleged GOS implication in the plot, as revealed in his recent message to President Bush (ref d). END COMMENT.

STAFFORD